# Hesson delighted as Pakistan bowlers come to the fore

FAISALABAD: South Africa were seemingly cruising in the decisive One-day International here at the Iqbal Stadium on Saturday, when Pakistan head coach Mike Hesson decided he should pass on some instructions to his players.

Quinton de Kock and Lhuan-dre Pretorius had struck boundaries in a 72-run opening partnership but run-making had been difficult otherwise and that had given Hesson renewed hope. The message to his team was to keep doing the same.

"It was about staying patient and keep searching for wickets," Hesson told a news conference after his side secured a rousing seven-wicket victory to seal a maiden ODI home series against the Proteas.

"It was about not getting frustrated, being happy with bowling dot balls and keeping up the pressure."

The tactic soon bore fruit as South Africa added just 71 for the next nine wickets to be bundled out for 143 with spinners Abrar Ahmed, Salman Ali Agha and Mohammad Nawaz scything through their line-up.

"The spinners did really well and I think the tone was set by Saim [Ayub] opening the bowling," added Hesson, who was "delighted" with Abrar's performance.

The spinner who was rested for the second game, which South Africa won to level the series, returned career-best figures of 4-27. "He had a few things to work on after the first ODI and I think he did wonderfully today," said Hesson.

The New Zealander also praised new skipper Shaheen for his bowling changes. "Shaheen's rotation of bowlers was excellent and he continues to grow in confidence," noted the coach.

Pakistan eased to the target with 24.5 overs to spare thanks to Saim's scintillating 77. The hosts had lost Fakhar Zaman early on but Babar Azam (27) provided Saim the reassuring support and lay the platform for the chase.

Babar had scores of seven and 11 in the first two ODIs but he showed full repertoire of his shots during his stay, and Hesson was convinced that there should be no questions regarding the right-hander's form.

"Babar is in extremely good form," he said. "He was good today. He came in a pressure situation but played his shots, unfortunately getting run out. I'd expect him to get a big score in the coming games."

Pakistan next play Sri Lanka in a three-match ODI series, starting on Nov 11, and Hesson was pleased with the outlook of his side.

"I think we've made progress … we've played well when [the series is on the line," he said. "We've also tried different players. We're a developing ODI side, we're developing consistency. ODIs is what we're focusing and today was a big step for us."

The coach revealed that the struggling Hasan Nawaz was being dropped for the Sri Lanka series with Abdul Samad replacing him.

"Hasan will be going back to play domestic cricket so he can get time to get some batting under his belt," he said.—Umaid Wasim

FAISALABAD: South African batter Rubin Hermann is clean bowled by Pakistan spinner Abrar Ahmed during the third One-day International at the Iqbal Stadium on Saturday.—AFP

# Abrar, Saim star as Pakistan seal historic home series against South Africa

By Umaid Wasim

FAISALABAD: A capacity crowd at the Iqbal Stadium got what it so desperately wanted: flowing strokes off the bat of Babar Azam. Normally, home supporters would've quietened at seeing Fakhar Zaman cleaned up early on in a small chase – potentially a harbinger of things to come; perhaps an all too familiar collapse in the offing.

But here on Saturday night, there were loud roars with chants of "Babar" echoing across the venue with Pakistan's batting superstar set to come next. Babar didn't disappoint, dispatching the South African bowlers with his trademark elan, and alongside Saim Ayub set Pakistan on their way to a rousing seven-wicket victory that sealed the three-match One-day International series 2-1 in their favour.

The venue had gone silent after Babar's departure in the 11th over, disappointment filling the air that they weren't able to see more of him when he was looking close to his best, run out for 27 after stroking five crisp fours.

But they soon found their voice as Saim tore into the South African attack with a 70-ball 77 that featured 11 fours and a six and although he fell with Pakistan nearing victory, Mohammad Rizwan (32 not out) took them through with Salman Ali Agha hitting the winning boundary.

The foundation for Pakistan's victory, under new skipper Shaheen Shah Afridi for this series, had been laid by the spinners as the visitors were bundled out for 143 in 37.5 overs. South Africa captain Matthew Breetzke had elected to bat and his side were coasting smoothly with openers Quinton de Kock (53) and Lhuan-dre Pretorius (39) well set until their lineup collapsed in the face of spin.

Salman (2-18) provided the first two wickets before Mohammad Nawaz (2-31) followed with the big dismissal of De Kock until Abrar Ahmed (4-27) ran through South Africa's spine and Pakistan eventually secured their first-ever ODI series triumph at home against their opponents.

"The credit goes to the players," reflected Shaheen at the post-match ceremony. "We didn't get much help in the first five or six overs but when the spinners came in, they made it really tough for them."

On a sun-kissed afternoon, the 72-run opening stand between Pretorius and De Kock ended after the former, who had hit four fours and a six, was caught at long-off by Babar and Salman struck again four overs later when Tony de Zorzi chipped him to the cover fielder.

De Kock, whose splendid century in the second game had helped South Africa level the series, completed his half century off 68 deliveries with his sixth four, a sweep of Nawaz, only to be trapped lbw by the spinner two deliveries later. The left-hander also hit a six.

South Africa then slipped from 106-2 to 109-4 with player-of-the-match Abrar cleaning up debutant Rubin Hermann on the first ball of the 26th over. Bails were flying once again, twice off two balls, two overs later as Abrar worked his magic. First Donovan Ferreira was bowled round his legs before a googly that stayed low knocked back Corbin Bosch's off-stump.

Pakistan had South Africa on the ropes with Breetzke (16) running out of partners quick and fast as Nawaz had Bjorn Fortuin lbw, and the writing was on the wall for the Proteas when their skipper was caught behind off Abrar, who recorded his career-best ODI figures, as they slipped to 130-8.

Pakistan captain Shaheen (2-18) then cleaned up the tail with two wickets in two balls – both of them bowled, including the wicket of Nqabayomzi Peter who made a defiant 16.

"Batting conditions were pretty tough and we didn't get enough runs and they batted freely because of that," rued De Kock, who was named player-of-the-series.

The sentiment was echoed by Breetzke. "Not enough runs… we were probably looking at 250. It was tough conditions and unfortunately we lost too many wickets there."

Nandre Burger's dismissal of Fakhar, knocking his stumps through the gate, brought Babar to the crease and after a quiet opening couple of overs, the right-hander, who had scores of seven and 11 in the opening two matches, got Pakistan off the mark in the third which ended with a boundary of Saim's bat – a punch through the covers.

A deft touch of Lundi Ngidi then brought Babar's first boundary before Saim flicked away the pacer for four. Babar then pulled Burger away for four before treating the crowd to two delightful boundaries off Ngidi in the sixth over.Boundaries were flowing for Pakistan – three of them coming off the eighth over off Bosch, all of them from Saim with the first a six. At the other end, Babar showed his elegance with a scrumptious cover drive for four as Pakistan reached 59-1 after the first 10.

Babar would soon be run out, but Saim took over and was unrelenting. He reached his 50 of just 39 balls with his eighth four, pulling away Burger. Fortuin and Ferreira were then swept for boundaries before the latter was hit for a one-bounce four.

Saim fell when he couldn't get the distance off Fortuin but by then the job was done with Rizwan closing it out. Rizwan, who was replaced by Shaheen as skipper ahead of the series, hit three fours and a six – over midwicket – to leave Pakistan four runs away and Salman finished it off with 24.5 overs to spare.

# Tahir opts out of BD tour over team selection differences

By Mohammad Yaqoob

LAHORE: Pakistan hockey, which is already reeling with a number of grave issues and problems that gradually led to its unprecedented decline in the last couple of decades, has witnessed yet another crisis. In a disturbing development, Pakistan head coach Tahir Zaman did not accompany the national squad which left for Bangladesh on Saturday to play a three-match series there.

It has emerged that Tahir developed differences with the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF), allegedly over national team's selection for the Bangladesh tour.

PHF secretary Rana Mujahid confirmed to *Dawn* that Tahir had the stance that the latecomers of the training camp, set up in Islamabad for the said tour, should not be included in the national squad.

"Tahir objected to including Rana Wahid and Hammad Anjum both of whom joined the camp late due to their contract with foreign leagues," Mujahid said.

Though Tahir adopted a strong stance to uphold discipline but overall there were 10 players joined the camp late for featuring in foreign leagues, the PHF secretary underlined.

"The PHF agreed to impose some cash penalty on all the players who had joined the [national] camp late. However, Tahir insisted that Wahid and Hammad should not be part of the national squad," Mujahid revealed.

In the absence of Tahir, the secretary added, team manager Mohammad Usman would also be handling the responsibilities of head coach in Bangladesh.

Speaking about the 2025-26 FIH Pro League in which Pakistan will also participate, Mujahid said that the PHF would try to hire the services of foreign coaches for the league.

"The performance in the Pro-League will be crucial to attain a good position in the world rankings, and the PHF is serious about taking every possible step to achieve this goal," the secretary added.

Launched in 2017, the Pro League featuring teams from nine countries will be held from December 2025 to June 2026. The event serves as a qualifier for the World Cup.

# Boxer Qudratullah qualifies for semis at Islamic Solidarity Games

RIYADH: Pakistan's Qudratullah moved into the semi-finals of the men's 55kg boxing event at the 6th Islamic Solidarity Games on Saturday, confirming at least a bronze medal for the country.

Competing at The Promenade–Art Tower, Qudrat defeated Sudan's Mohamed Othman 10-0 in a one-sided quarter-final decided unanimously by the judges. The 20-year-old from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will face Egypt's Amir Mohamed Farag Ahmed Kelany in Sunday's semifinal.

Earlier, Fatima Zahra had secured Pakistan's first women's boxing medal at the Games, overcoming Algeria's Hamda Melissa 5-0 in the 60kg quarterfinal. The 19-year-old from Sargodha will meet her Egyptian opponent in the semi-final.

At the Olympic Complex Swimming Hall, Jehanara Nabi advanced to the semi-finals of the women's 50m butterfly after clocking 30.77 seconds in her heat. She, however, did not qualify for the final. Team-mate Mishael Aisha Hayat Yousaf finished fifth in her heat with a time of 31.42 seconds.

In the men's 50m butterfly, Ali Mohammad Mitha registered 26.31 seconds for seventh in his heat, while Syed Mohammad Sodik Malik Hatim placed seventh in another with 26.13. Turkey's Berk Ozkul led the qualifiers in 24.45.

In freestyle events, Hussein Shawky completed the men's 50m heat in 24.75 seconds for fifth place, and Syed Mohammad Danish Khan clocked 25.68 for sixth. Pakistan's mixed 4x100m freestyle relay team finished third in their heat in 3:55.82, behind Azerbaijan (3:47.31) but ahead of Kyrgyzstan.

In table tennis, Pakistan's women's team lost 4-8 to Uganda in Group 'C', with Bisma Faryal, Hoor Fawad and Kalsom Khan featuring in the match.—Agencies

# De Ligt rescues United in Spurs draw

LONDON: Matthijs de Ligt's last-gasp equaliser rescued a 2-2 draw for Manchester United at Tottenham in the English Premier League on Saturday.

Bryan Mbeumo fired United ahead in the 32nd minute amid mounting discontent at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

Booed off at half-time, Tottenham hit back and looked to have secured a dramatic victory after Mathys Tel equalised in the 84th minute and Richarlison deflected in a shot from Wilson Odobert in the 91st minute.

But United defender De Ligt powered in a 96th-minute header to extend his side's unbeaten run to five games.

Tottenham's failure to hold onto the lead was another blow to their dismal record in home league games in 2025, which includes only one win in six top-flight matches in north London this term.

Neither manager was satisfied with the outcome and United boss Ruben Amorim said: "During the game you feel that the three points were there.

"We have so much to grow as a team because today was our day to win. If we have a little bit more bravery, we can kill this game."

Tottenham manager Thomas Frank added: "A lot of things we could have done a bit better. The last goal is all about the urgency, maybe don't give the cross away and defend better." Seventh-placed United have now failed to beat third-placed Tottenham in eight meetings, including a 1-0 defeat in the Europa League final in May.

**WEST HAM BOOST**

West Ham boosted their bid to avoid relegation with a 3-2 win against fellow strugglers Burnley at the London Stadium.

Burnley took the lead in the 35th minute when Lesley Ugochukwu's cross reached Zian Flemming and the Dutch forward headed home from close range.

Callum Wilson hauled West Ham level with a predatory finish from the rebound after Crysencio Summerville's shot was saved in the 44th minute.

Tomas Soucek netted for West Ham in the 77th minute, the Czech midfielder bundling in from close range after Lucas Paqueta's cross was parried into his path by Burnley keeper Martin Dubravka.

And, when Dubravka fumbled the ball towards Kyle Walker-Peters in the 87th minute, the defender's clinical finish put the result beyond doubt.

Josh Cullen's stoppage-time strike was no consolation for Burnley.

Third-bottom West Ham's second successive win moved them level on points with fourth-bottom Burnley.

Everton ended a three-game winless run with a 2-0 victory over Fulham at the Hill Dickinson Stadium.

David Moyes' men went in front when Idrissa Gueye prodded home after James Tarkowski's header hit the bar in first-half stoppage time.

Everton defender Michael Keane wrapped up the points when he turned in Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall's corner in the 81st minute.—AFP

LONDON: Manchester United's Matthijs de Ligt (L) heads to score the equaliser during the Premier League match against Tottenham Hotspur at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on Saturday.—Reuters

# India win Australia series after fifth T20 washed out

BRISBANE: The fifth and final Twenty20 International between Australia and India was washed out after a storm swept across Brisbane's Gabba ground on Saturday, leaving Suryakumar Yadav's tourists as 2-1 series winners.

After being put in to bat, India's openers Abhishek Sharma and Shubman Gill made a bright start to the innings by putting on 52 without loss in just under five overs before the match was stopped, initially for lightning.

Gill took the early initiative and pummelled six fours in his 29 not out, while his partner Abhishek was dropped by Glenn Maxwell and Ben Dwarshuis on his way to an unbeaten 23.

The sellout crowd at the Gabba hung around optimistically waiting for play to resume but the stormy weather persisted and the match was abandoned some two and a half hours after it started.

The opening match in the series in Canberra was also washed out before Australia won the second in Melbourne by four wickets on the back of the bowling of paceman Josh Hazlewood.

Australia withdrew Hazlewood and a number of other players named in the Ashes squad so they could prepare to face England with the red ball and India won the third T20 by five wickets in Hobart and the fourth on the Gold Coast by 48 runs.

Abhishek was named Player of the Series for his 163 runs at an average of 40.75.

"The way everybody chipped in in every game and we came back from being one match down, I think credit goes to all the boys; a complete team effort," said Yadav.

India, who top the ICC rankings in the shortest format, will head home with confidence and plenty of player options ahead of their defence of the T20 World Cup title on home soil early next year.

"I thought all in all it was a good series, two teams really going at it," said Australian captain Mitchell Marsh. "India won the games when it mattered so congratulations to them."—Reuters

INDIAN players celebrate with the series trophy after the fifth Twnety20 International against Australia was washed out at he Gabba on Saturday.—AFP